

What is claimed is:

1. A video recorder programming device comprising:

means for communicating between a user and said video recorder programming device through a telephone connection;

means for storing audio messages transmitted by said user through said means for communicating;

means for receiving and storing recording parameter data transmitted by said user through said means for communicating:

means for starting a recording process by a video recorder responsive to the stored parameters.

2. A device according to claim 1, wherein the means for starting the recording process comprises an infrared signal transmitter that transmits a command to the video recorder causing the video recorder to enter a programming mode, transmits the parameters to the video recorder as the program and transmits a command to the video recorder to leave the programming mode.

3. A device according to claim 1 wherein the parameters include a channel number and a start time, and the device further comprises a television receiver and decoder including a television tuner for tuning to the channel specified by the channel number at a time equal to the start time to receive and decode a television signal corresponding to the parameters, whereby the video recorder records the decoded television signal.

4. A device according to claim 3, wherein the device further comprises a mass storage device and the means for starting the recording process causes the

decoded television signal to be stored in the mass storage device as the video recorder.

1 5. A device according to claim 1, wherein the means for storing audio
2 messages comprises a telephone answering machine.

1 6. The device of claim 5, further comprising means, responsive to a
2 predetermined dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) code for switching the device
3 between operating as the telephone answering machine and as the video recorder
4 programming device.

1 7. A method of programming a video recording device comprising:

2 enabling telephone communications between a user and a set top box;
3
4 transmitting audio data to the user to prompt the user to transmit audio
5 programming data including start time data and one of stop time data and duration
data;

6 receiving the audio programming data into the set top box through said
7 telephone communications and converting the audio programming data into command
8 data for the video recording device;

9 transmitting the command data to the video recording device.

1 8. A method according to claim 7, wherein the set-top box further includes
2 telephone answering machine functionality and the method further comprises the step
3 of receiving predetermined audio data to switch the set-top box from the answering
4 machine functionality prior to receiving the audio programming data.

1 9. A method according to claim 7, wherein the step of transmitting the
2 command data to the video recording device includes converting the command data
3 into infra-red signals and transmitting the infra-red signals to the video recording
4 device.

1 10. A method according to claim 7, further including the step of storing the
2 command data in the set top box.

1 11. A method according to claim 10, wherein the step of transmitting audio
2 data to the user includes the steps of prompting the user to select between entering
3 new programming data, deleting existing programming data and editing existing
4 programming data and the step of receiving the audio programming data includes
5 modifying the stored command data responsive to audio programming data received
6 through the telephone communications.

1 12. A method of programming a video recorder, said method comprising:

2 detecting an incoming telephone call by a set top box containing an automated
3 answering machine;

4 enabling telephone communication between a user and said set top box;

5 transmitting a message from said automated answering machine to said user;

6 detecting a programming signal transmitted by said user through said
7 telephonic communication to said automated answering machine,

8 receiving programming data into said automated answering machine, said
9 programming data being transmitted by said user through said telephone
10 communication and including start time data and at least one of stop time data and
11 duration data,

12 transmitting said programming data and a control code from said automated
13 answering machine to said video recorder to enable a recording function of said video
14 recorder.

1 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising storing said programming
2 data into a data storage device.

1 14. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of transmitting the
2 programming data to the video recorder further includes the step of converting the
3 programming data into an infrared signal .